

## **Questions and Answers Regarding Bioterrorism Preparedness**

### **What precautions should the general public take regarding the threat of bioterrorism?**

The Arizona Department of Health Services is not recommending any specific bioterrorism-related precautions for the general public. However, the Arizona Division of Emergency Management does recommend that the public always have a family disaster plan in place. This would include having the following emergency supplies on hand:

- A three-day supply of water and food that won't spoil
- Clothing, blankets, and sleeping bags for all family members
- First Aid Kit, including family's prescription medications
- Battery-powered radio and flashlights with extra batteries
- Extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash, or traveler's checks
- Sanitation supplies
- Special Items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members
- An extra pair of glasses

Having a plan in place is necessary to respond to any emergency, be it a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. For more information please visit the Arizona Division of Emergency Management's website.

### **Are vaccines recommended in case of a bioterrorism attack?**

There are no vaccines being recommended for the general public. Please see below for more specific information on anthrax and smallpox vaccines.

### **What is the health department doing to protect the public from bioterrorism?**

While there is little that the Arizona Department of Health Services can do to prevent an act of bioterrorism, the Department has implemented an enhanced disease surveillance system to rapidly identify any unusual disease events that may be occurring in the state. The Department is also working closely with agencies and organizations all across the state to coordinate response efforts and, in case of an attack, would immediately provide pertinent health information to the general public via mass media.

### **Smallpox**

As a result of the successful worldwide eradication of smallpox, smallpox vaccine was removed from the commercial market in 1983, and is no longer a licensed product in the United States. The United States Public Health Service maintains an emergency stockpile of approximately 15 million doses.

At the present time, smallpox vaccine is supplied only to certain laboratory workers who are at risk of infection with smallpox-like viruses as a result of their occupation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is authorized to release the vaccine only to these workers under an Investigational New Drug (IND) permit from the Food and Drug

Administration (FDA). The IND does not allow us to release smallpox vaccine to any other person for any reason.

The Federal Government, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is concerned about the threat of bioterrorism. Plans for a response to such an event are being developed at many levels of the Government. These plans do not include wide spread use of smallpox vaccine at this point. The benefit and risk of reintroduction of smallpox vaccine are continuing to be examined.

You may wish to consult the current U.S. Public Health Service's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendations on smallpox vaccination at

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5010a1.htm>

### **Anthrax**

Anthrax is a disease found in animals in many places around the world, including the United States. Anthrax, however, has never been known to exist in Arizona. The Anthrax Vaccine is not available commercially except to the military because of the risk the military may encounter in their work. You may wish to consult the current U.S. Public Health Service's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommendations on anthrax vaccination at

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr4915a1.htm>